

Textbook Evaluation Report . . .



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for Committee

prepared by the TEXTBOOK EVALUATION COMMITTEE of
America's Future, Inc., 542 Main St., New Rochelle, N. Y.

Book: *Civics For Young Americans*. By Rollin Bennet Posey. Row, Peterson & Company, Evanston, Illinois and White Plains, New York, 1960, 456 pages.

Reviewer: Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, Ph. et Litt.D., Fulbright Professor, Catholic University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain.

Although it is not considered good form to begin a review on a personal level, I trust that my readers will forgive me for saying that I approached *Civics For Young Americans* with a skeptical and even jaundiced eye. Civics textbooks are almost universally bad because they usually are totally without any subject matter proper to the study in question. Revealing a weird mixture of indifferent and bad history linked with ideological considerations that often simply reflect the prejudices of the authors, most civics texts fail to do the only job that a civics text ought to: i.e. introduce pupils to the *procedures* of government, to the processes of our republic as those processes are actually found to function within the institutions going to make up the complexity of governments whose inner harmony constitutes the American way of life. A civics text ought not be concerned with history in one text supposedly shaped for one course of study; a civics text ought not to explore the ultimate foundations of American republicanism because these foundations, religious and philosophical in nature, can really be understood only in the light of the historical experience of the American people, an experience demanding a course of studies all its own.

Civics looks to processes and procedures, as indicated. It looks to the structure of government and not its content. This is precisely the job to which *Civics For Young Americans* addresses itself and the job is executed splendidly. Professor Posey has grouped the study of civics around concrete situations and stories whose counterparts in real life, he assures us, were exactly as related in the text. Each chapter, therefore, presents a small drama which crystallizes a process of government. The young student is presented with a problem in due process that reaches the Supreme Court; he is shown a court room in session; a bill that passes a state legislature; a

labor dispute that involves the intricacies of the Taft-Hartley Act; a campaign for a seat in the House of Representatives; a citizen making out his income tax; an immigrant applying for citizenship. The concrete cases are vivid enough to catch the interest of the student but sufficiently pruned of detail so that the point in question is not lost on the reader. I would venture that many adults could read this text, written for pupils of junior and early high school age, and find that they were not nearly so informed in the processes of our governments as they thought they had been.

The text is divided into six parts which move from government as it most immediately meets our eye to government in its more remote if not less important aspects. Part One looks to city and county government. Part Two studies state government. Part Three is dedicated to our national government. Part Four to the relations between government and business, banking, agriculture, labor, and welfare. Part Five discusses international affairs. Part Six (the least unified of the book) looks to government and the people - liberties; elections; Democrats and Republicans; taxes and the debt; and the meaning of good citizenship. An appendix includes the Declaration of Independence; the Constitution; certain information about the states; a list of our presidents and vice-presidents; and "A Short Guide to Parliamentary Procedure" based on Jefferson's famous manual. The charts and sketches that accompany the text are better than those usually found and here and there even permit a little humor and irony to grace the usually sober study of civics. Each chapter is appended by a section called "Activities for Your Class" which show a nice balance between questions requiring strictly factual answers and questions suggesting a possible participation in the governmental process under discussion by the students.

While firmly rooted in the American tradition in its larger and indisputable aspects, the text skillfully avoids partisanship when it touches upon the controversial. For example, the Taft-Hartley Law is neither damned nor sanctified but is shown concretely as a living law within the reality of present day America. The United Nations is declared, quite flatly, "not to be government" but to be "an association of nations." To the objection that "it's not fair" that the Security Council cannot take any action even if ten members are in favor and one member is not, the text says "Whether it's fair or not ... that's the way it is." In short, there is no one-world propaganda here nor is there any of that painful idealism that clouds even normally realistic spirits when they turn to the study of the United Nations: the institution is simply described as it is. The treaty-making powers of the Congress are discussed altogether without any suggestion that they be made subordinate to the United Nations and the instrument which implements American foreign policy is made to be the series of treaties with our allies that we have made since World War II. These alliances are described as they are: i.e. as potential weapons of retaliation against our only possible enemy, the Soviet Union.

One objectionable feature is the division of governments into

"democracies" and "dictatorships." Although Russia is called a "paper democracy" and an actual dictatorship, our ally Spain is listed - along with China and Russia - as a "dictatorship." This simplification is intolerable in a book which is otherwise free of leftist ideology. The description of the Federal German Republic and the United Kingdom is quite decent, although some Englishmen (were they to read this book, which they will not!) might grumble that the queen's role is not all that ceremonial and devoid of political significance!

The author insists, when designating our government, on calling it a "democracy" without qualification. Is it too late in the general process of the corruption of the language to insist that the United States is "a representative republic" with democratic elements and not a democracy *per se simpliciter*? In any event, the truly republican and balanced structure of our constitution is detailed in almost every chapter and Professor Posey is less guilty of the logical flaw of naming the part for the whole than he is of a semantic flaw now deeply imbedded in the American consciousness.

I would not wish to close this review by suggesting that *Civics For Young Americans* is a partisanly "conservative" text. This reviewer cannot guess the politics of Professor Posey as he can guess the politics of almost all authors of civics texts. Actually this is a text that ought to please most Americans regardless of their political convictions simply because the text does what it sets out to do. It makes government as a process intelligible to the young reader. I am delighted to recommend this book to the serious consideration of any teacher of the subject on the junior and early high school level of instruction.

TEXTBOOK EVALUATION COMMITTEE

This Committee came into being because of much evidence of socialist and other propaganda in textbooks currently used in our secondary schools.

Its purpose is to evaluate these textbooks to determine their accuracy and competence and to report objectively the extent to which they give misleading or false impressions about our American form of government, our unique economy, our history and the relationship of the United States and its citizens to the other countries and peoples of the world. The reviewers will also recommend textbooks which meet the Committee's standards.

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